

Draft Minutes: Seventh Massachusetts Food Policy Council Meeting
Friday, October 5, 2012 9:30 am – 12:30 pm
Framingham Public Library, Main Library Location, 49 Lexington Street, Framingham, MA 01702

In attendance:

Cheryl Bartlett, MA Depart of Public Health
Valerie Bassett, Community based nutrition and public health expert
Kerry Bowie, designee for Deputy Commissioner Gary Moran, MA Depart of Environ Protection
Stephanie Brown, Assistant Commissioner, MA Depart of MA Transitional Assistance
Jeff Cole, MA Farmers Markets
Helen Caulton Harris, West Springfield Board of Health
Representative Steve Kulik
Katie Millet, MA Depart of Education
Bonita Oehlke, MA Dept of Agricultural Resources
Alex Rittershaus, Representative Ferguson's office
Mike Scuderi, for Manny Costa, Costa Fruit and Produce
Helen Caulton Harris, West Springfield Board of Health
Gregory Watson, Commissioner, MA Dept of Agricultural Resources

The meeting was called to order by FPC Chair Commissioner Greg Watson at 9:43 AM. He welcomed all attendees and explained that the meeting was rescheduled from September 7 to October 5 in order to allow the FPC Advisory Committee to better prepare for their presentation. FPC members introduced themselves.

FPC members agreed to by consent to alter the agenda to hear the presentation of the Eos Foundation. Andrea Silbert and Mari Brennan Barrera, outlined Eos foundation's work to combat childhood hunger with a focus on access to and quality of (nutrition) food. They asked for input as they identify two Massachusetts communities, in addition to Cape Cod, where they might best focus their efforts.

Cheryl Bassett encouraged them to work with DPH re: MA in Motion and BMI issues.

Phil Korman talked about the Healthy Initiatives Pilot and the opportunity for access for additional SNAP to be accessed for farmers markets.

Andrea Silber responded that connecting the SNAP piece to fresh foods and farmers markets would be of interest.

Commissioner Watson encouraged follow-up for attendees. Andrea asked members to contact her and Mari at silbert@eosfoundation.org.

Minutes (June 1, 2012) A motion was made by Representative Kulik to approve the minutes. Seconded by John Lee. Passed on unanimous voice vote.

Christa Drew presented the MA FPC Advisory Committee's draft framework for a statewide comprehensive strategic food system plan, as assigned; To lay out a potential process for stakeholder and agency involvement, an estimated timeline, the need for and potential availability of financial resources and a general framework for goals and objectives related to improving Massachusetts food and farm resiliency, and nutritional health.

She began by providing background information on existing comprehensive, general statewide food systems and summaries of their plans and Christa noted drivers of current food system concepts and state plans, as well as the New England Food Vision, led by Brian Donahue at Brandeis University.

The Vermont Food System plan is considered to be among the most robust plans in the region. Generated at the request of and with funding from the state legislature. Completed in 12 months with a budget of \$600,000.

The RI plan is agriculture focused/oriented. Funded by a consortium of private funders with a focus on agriculture.

All the other plans have not had much state funding.

NH - has an early report and is working on plans for comprehensive stakeholder engagement. Universities and private foundations have taken the initiative.

ME - has a University as a convening agency.

CT - Governor's Council isn't providing funding but has provided administrative support.

MA- there is much food policy work at various levels happening at in MA. The committee concludes extensive inclusion of existing Councils/Collaboratives and Networks is necessary for success. Process options that facilitate effective and practical inclusion were reviewed. A basic premise is that an impartial outside facilitator that organizes and otherwise provides support for planning and the process is necessary. The committee concludes that to create an effective plan 18 months is needed and the way the planning process unfolds is just as, or more important than, the results of the planning process.

Katie Millet: Who is being considered to be included as stakeholders? A: The Advisory Committee has not made a specific list but wants to be inclusive of a wide range of individuals and groups including the MA Food Association, MA Restaurant Association and other industry groups that are not currently participating with the FPC.

Kerry Bowie: Over the past 8 months we have had a listening session for environmental justice including food and many faith based groups have been involved. He believes these types of groups should be included.

Jeff Cole: Have you considered an intermediate plan between fewer expert participants that promotes faster process and extensive inclusivity that requires more time, that the FPC might help to facilitate by identifying and convening groups that fairly represent the full diversity of participants needed to create and effectively implement food policy while maintaining an effective total number of direct participants? Answer: Hybrid models are important. A process specialist would address this issue.

Commissioner Greg Watson: Part of the hybrid model can be to ask the broadest groups if their perspective is represented, and work to ensure that they are. If stakeholders are thus represented, they expect dialogue with their network.

Assistant Commissioner Stephanie Brown: Some of the homeless shelters have workforce development programs related to the food industry and should be included. DTA might use employment funding to support these efforts later on in the process. There may be some nontraditional connections to be made, for example, the DTA disaster SNAP program. Some of the large retailers must be involved, and Eos on the Cape.

Helen Caulton Harris: It's important to bring our natural allies across the Commonwealth up to speed with our plans. We need to engage current FPCs so that they understand what we are doing and are able to participate and support.

Christa Drew: There can be presentations and dialogue with these groups up front.

Valerie Bassett: Regional emergency preparedness including food distribution, and food transport groups and supermarkets are also important. Economic and environmental justice perspectives should be included as part of the conversation.

Commissioner Watson: In terms of the food system, the goal is to be very inclusive. Our growers can't do it all so we need an extra effort that is inclusive within the supply chain, economic and functional systems perspective. We do not want to inadvertently alienate any group.

Katie Millet: There are 7,000 childcare centers providing meals as well as senior centers and other elder care facilities.

Cheryl Bartlett: We need to acknowledge power of the media and their role in unhealthy food consumption.

Commissioner Watson: The media has been engaged to know what is going on with food. We want to nurture and capitalize. They want to do positive stories for genuine interest, optimism, and because food does touch everyone. As early as possible, we need to engage the media.

Attendees in the audience were asked to identify themselves and respond/add to the presentation from the FPC Advisory Committee. Summary of comments:

There is a need for expertise and guidance relating to the fisheries sector. A Farm Credit East report talks about the hidden economic impact in the region which is agriculture. In their analysis, fisheries and ag is aggregated to look at the impact, as well as disaggregated for review. Let's not make decisions by default.

The city of New Bedford is the largest port for scallops in the world. Fish and shellfish are important sources of protein for the south coast.

The FPC is an advantageous position to check with other groups such as the Roots of Change in California which has been effective in food policy and engaging environmental, food and social justice and civic engagement.

Remember aggregators for processing and distribution, especially for small producers and don't forget anchor institutions such as hospitals and universities.

Workforce development groups, community based CDCs, family based literacy programs, supermarkets, community colleges, land grant universities, Career centers and farm labor groups should be included sooner rather than later.

Food intersects with all the goals of the Commonwealth and should be integrated with agency goals since it is a positive message. It is important to build on existing state plans. There was an interesting

presentation coordinated by a Colorado health agency to change eating habits that engaged participants in a positive, funny way. A variety of educational vehicles can be powerful tools.

Chef's Collaborative and other culinary groups should be included. A google document could keep everyone involved.

We should educate the public about food policy and role that into the plan: use the Media, summits, etc.

Social norms and the role of the media in changing norms should be addressed.

The role of understanding climate change should be included.

Community tables at farmers markets offer an opportunity for outreach.

From the job training perspectives, part of the education has to be anticipatory, with a focus on career centers and workforce investment centers.

Schools at all levels (noted the 4 accredited agricultural high schools in Massachusetts and the MA Ag in the Classroom program) should be included.

It would be important to highlight successes from other states to help engage community groups and to understand the opportunity for policy change.

Valerie Bassett: Education for policy makers, in a bipartisan way should also be included.

Commissioner Watson: This could be included in MA Ag Day at the state house, as well as all the "Edible" magazines across the state. We need to find the connecting thread using this as a vehicle.

Helen Caulton Harris: It's important to work with the faith communities and community leaders who hold the trust of their communities since, ultimately, engagement transfers from one person to another.

Kerry Bowie: With all the social media and tweeting, how do we reach people digitally in the same way as big corporations?

John Lee: Concerned that if we are going to get ahead with this it needs to be addressed regionally. We need to reach out and not duplicate each others' work. I see us talking about some of things now that we discussed 40 years ago.

Christa Drew: There is a lot of interest in regional collaboration and parity in plans. There is a collective wisdom that those types of conversations need to happen. There are many opportunities and we need to identify those and where we can work together, for example, distribution and processing.

Representative Kulik: Part of our plan should include interstate collaboration.

John Lee: Vermont has a low input pasteurizer that could have important impact for MA producers.

Commissioner Watson: We want some self assessment to know what we are bringing to the table and that we have buy in. We need to be thinking regionally.

To the question from the Advisory Committee re: resources. Representative Kulik commented that he would be interested in exploring the potential of a supplemental budget item in January 2013. The project timeline is good. In January, we will probably have an opportunity but we will need to have an idea of the support from foundations and outside sources at that time. Another possibility is the existing jobs and economic bill which can be reviewed for opportunities to fund studies as well as check the sub budget for earmarks. The legislature has a focus on sustainable jobs so food policy as it relates to jobs can fit in well.

Commissioner Watson thanks Christa and Advisory Committee for pulling this all together in such a short time.

Concluding the Advisory committee report: Christa Drew requested language that the FPC accepts the Advisory Committee recommendations and that the FPC move ahead with engaging a process specialist.

Cheryl Bartlett: Who would do the hiring?

Christa Drew: Suggested it be a private contract between the Advisory Committee and the contractor. Moderate discussion ensued.

Jeff Cole made a motion to approve the FPC Advisory Committee to research the engagement of a process specialist as proposed in their report and to approve the solicitation of funds for this engagement. Seconded by Kerry Bowie. Passed on voice vote.

By-Law committee report: Jeff Cole on behalf of the By Laws Committee presented a draft policy related to letters of support from the MA FPC, as charged in June. In sum the committee proposes to approach the matter as in a conflict of interest policy. The draft was presented in writing to FPC members and read aloud for the audience.

Jeff asked for feedback:

Helen Caulton Harris: She is concerned about the length of time it might take to evaluate a conflicted position and asks if the process might be that the conflict is evaluated by the Executive Committee and a recommendation made to the FPC?

Jeff Cole: In cases where conflict or potential conflict exist the entire committee must convene, directly related parties excepted, and conclude (vote) it is in the best interest of the council versus a non conflicted position. The Executive Committee could filter requests prior to the discussion however.

Valerie Bassett: She is concerned that under the draft only one letter will be issued when more than one organization is applying for the same grant. She feels support should go to any group that has goals in alignment with the FPC.

After discussion consensus was reached that multiple letters of support for the same grant are acceptable and beneficial to the FPC.

Representative Kulik: Approval for letters can be difficult since the Council meets quarterly. Could we authorize the group to meet by email? Organizations generally don't provide a lot of lead time. Jeff Cole noted he understands the by-laws of the FPC provide for meetings by e-mail.

Representative Kulik moved that the FPC adopt the following policy:

In cases where a grant is offered or influenced by a FPC member the benefit to the Food Policy Council will be evaluated by the council and a vote to issue a letter taken. Requests for support letters will be submitted to the executive committee, preferably at least one month before due. In cases where there is no conflict the executive committee will evaluate each request and issue letters of support as it determines is proper. In cases where there are multiple requests for support letters to the same grant, letters will be issued for all proposals that benefit the FPC or its mission. Seconded by John Lee. Passed by voice vote.

Nominating Committee: Representative Kulik asked for any nominations to fill the Advisory Committee position vacated by Amanda Kinchla.

Kerry Bowie: Do you have someone in mind?

John Lee suggested contacting Steve Hebert as well as Dean Goodwin.

Commissioner Watson: If you know of anyone, let Representative Kulik know.

Moved by John Lee: Representative Kulik to be empowered to solicit recommendations for the open position on the Food Policy Council Advisory Committee position vacated recently by Amanda Kinchla from UMASS, with outreach to Steve Hubert and Dean Steve Godwin in order to fill the vacant position by December. Seconded by Cheryl Bartlett. Passed on voice vote.

Jeff Cole noted former Commissioner of Public Health John Auerbach's expertise and value to the FPC. He proposes Representative Kulik be empowered assess John's interest in becoming a member of the FPC Advisory Committee.

Commissioner Watson: Former Commissioner Auerbach expressed recent interest in the FPC in spite of the recent agency changes; he has a strong commitment to the FPC.

Discussion ensued regarding the placement process. By-laws allow the FPC to create a positions on the Advisory Committee to expand its expertise/or benefit to the Council. Concluded the position can be created at an upcoming FPC meeting if John Auerbach is willing to join.

Approved by consensus that Representative Kulik talk with John Auerbach and noted with unanimous approval that The FPC commends, and very much appreciates former Commissioner Auerbach's work and efforts to support the MA FPC.

Program:

Commissioner introduced Frank Mangan PhD, UMASS who discussed his work to provide culturally-appropriate fresh produce to urban areas, highlighting work in Chelsea and East Boston.

FPC Intern Ronak Dave' shared an update on her research on the Cultural Receptivity of Healthy Food in Massachusetts as it related to FPC objectives. Her proposed research question is: How can CSA programs learn from urban communities to be more cultural receptive in order to include low income and minority populations? She will review cities in Massachusetts, as well as other cities nationally.

Valerie Bassett made a motion to accept Ms. Dave's research question. Seconded by Helen Caulton Harris. Passed on voice vote

Announcements:

The next FPC meeting is December 7, at the Trustees of the Reservation Property Doyle Reservation in Leominster.

DEP has new guidance on gardening on brown fields.

CISA has a senior farm share program with 350 members. It would be interesting to understand the cultural breakdown of the group.

The NESAWG conference "It takes a region" is Oct 28 - 30 in Saratoga. Make plans to attend!

The FPC has an open invitation to tour the Western MA Food Processing Facilities.

Attendees were invited to attend South Coast FPC meetings.

Helen Caulton Harris made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:18 PM. Seconded by Cheryl Bartlett. Passed on unanimous vote.